

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7448

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: UR PFOR

SUBJECT: TREATMENT OF U. S. JOURNALISTS

REF: (A) MOSCOW 0804 (B) MOSCOW 0538 (C) MOSCOW 1255

1. NEWSWEEK CORRESPONDENT JAY AXELBANK HAS ADVISED EMBASSY THAT HE WAS CALLED TO MFA PRESS DIVISION MARCH 22 AND SHARPLY REPRIMANDED BY FIRST DEPUTY CHIEF F. M. SIMONOV FOR "REATING A SCENE" AND BERATING CUSTOMS OFFICIALS AT Khabarovsk Airport. AXELBANK, RETURNING FROM JAPAN AT THE TIME WITH TWO NEW TAPE- RECORDERS, DISPUTED OFFICIALS' DECISION TO IMPOUND THEM, REASONING THT IT WOULD BE SOME TIME BEFORE THE ITEMS WERE FORWARDED TO MOSCOW. HE CHARACTERIZED THE INCIDENT AS " THE SORT OF THING THAT HAPPENS IN CUSTOMS SHEDS AROUND THE WORLD EVERY DAY." (A DESCRIPTION OF SIMILAR DIFFICULTIES WITH Khabarovsk Airport CUSTOMS ENCOUNTERED BY THE WHITE HOUSE FELLOWS GROUP TWO WEEKS LATER FOLLOWS BY AIRGRAM.) SIMONOV CLAIMED THAT THIS WAS ONLY THE LATEST (OC REF (A), (B)) IN A SERIES OF UNSEEMLY ACTS BY AXELBANK DEMONSTRATING HIS HOSTILITY TO SOVIET OFFICIALDOM. HE ACCUSED AXELBANK OF " VERY BAD JOURNALISTIC ETHICS," OF WRITING " ONE- SIDED AND VICIOUS ARTICLES DISTORTING SOVIET REALITY," AND OF OVER- CONCEN- TRATING ON THE " JEWISH QUESTION," ADDING THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WAS LOSING ITS PATIENCE WITH HIM, AND STRONGLY HINTING THAT THIS WOULD BE THE LAST SUCH WARNING HE WOULD RECEIVE. HE CLOSED WITH A LOVE- IT- OR- LEAVE- IT " IF YOU DON' T LIKE OUR COUNTRY

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AND SOVIET PEOPLE, WHY DON ' T YOU GET OUT?" -- TO WHICH AXELBANK REPLIED THAT WHILE HE WAS VERY FOND OF THE RUSSIANS AS PEOPLE, HE " SIMPLY DISAGREED WITH CERTAIN POLITICAL THINGS THAT HAPPEN HERE." AXELBANK ATTRIBUTES THE CALL- IN TO A RECENT ARTICLE HE FILED (BY TELEX, NOT YET PUBLISHED) CONCERNING WORK- INCENTIVES AND WORKER MORALE IN THE USSR.

2. IN ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE MFA' S LONG MEMORY AND APPARENT WILLINGNESS TO REVIVE RECENTLY QUIESCENT ISSUES (OF REF (C)), PRESS OFFICE AIDE ALEKS VOZNIKO ADVISED MOSCOW AP BUREAU CHIEF MASON THAT HE SHOULD SUBMIT " ANY OTHER NAME" THAN JIM PEIPER' S FOR AN MFA TRIP SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 28-30 TO IVANOVA AND PALEKH. (MASON REFUSED .) MASON' S REQUEST FOR AN EXPLANATION MET WITH A TYPICALLY OBLIQUE RESPONSE: " YOU KNOW WHY." MASON STATES HIS INTENTION TO RAISE MATTER BY FORMAL LETTER TO MFA PRESS CHIEF CHERYAKOV . WILL ADVISE.

3. SEVERAL U. S. CORRESPONDENTS INVITED ON MARCH 28-30 MFA TRIP AND HAVE ACCEPTED. ALSO, OGDEN OF UPI JUST RETURNED FROM CAUCASUS SKIING STORY, FROMSON OF CBS FROM SIBERIAN SABLE HUNT (ALTHOUGH TOO LATE FOR THAT HE TRIED TO SALVAGE TRIP WITH OTHER ANGLES), AND SEEGER OF LA TIMES GIVEN TENTATIVE APPROVAL FOR TBILISI- YEREVAN TRIP TURNED DOWN LAST OCTOBER AT TIME OF NEW YORK CITY BALLET VISIT.
DUBS

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